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**ITALY**  
**1945**





# **Battle History**

# **473 rd**

# **United States Infantry**

## **World War II**

**EDITED By LT. JACK F. RAMSBERGER**  
**PHOTOS By ARMY PICTORIAL SERVICE**  
**ART AND RESEARCH By REGIMENTAL S - 2 SECTION**

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**I T A L Y - - - 1 9 4 5**





**COLONEL WILLIAM YARBOROUGH**, who commanded the 473rd Infantry Regiment throughout its combat in Italy is shown here with **General Mark Clark**, 15th Army Group Commander, inspecting regimental troops.

# Foreword

*This is not a large volume. It cannot be because it is concerned with a relatively short period of combat by a relatively small unit in the Italian campaign.*

*It is, however, an important record because to the men of the 473rd Infantry Regiment who took part in the battles recorded here, this volume tells the story of the most memorable and most terrible period in their individual lives.*

*The many technical difficulties involved in publishing this document in Italy and the fact that publication was rushed because of overall military contingencies, may have resulted in errors of various descriptions. This is a regrettable but unavoidable fact.*

*To preserve the continuity of the story and furnish minute detail of certain actions, it was necessary to refer to specific individuals and acts of heroism. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that these individuals and acts were mentioned only as a story-telling expedient. It would be impossible in a small book to describe all of the meritorious acts or mention all of the outstanding soldiers in the regiment.*

*Without the assistance of experienced professional printers on the staff of the Rome Stars and Stripes, this publication could never have existed. They furnished the cover material and paper. They arranged for a printer. They set type and made illustrations. They gave unselfishly of their time and valuable advice. In all, their cooperation was another of many demonstrations of service to the AEF by a fine overseas newspaper.*

*The mailing list for the distribution of this book was a lengthy one. Names and addresses were taken from official records. Some of the records were incomplete at the time. The typing was done by Italians and accuracy was made impossible by language difficulties.*

*It is believed, in spite of the above, that most former members of the Regiment will find a copy at home upon their arrival. Additional copies cannot be provided.*

**ANY FORMER 473RD SOLDIER WHO DIDN'T GET A COPY SHOULD WRITE BOX 303, DUNELLEN, NEW JERSEY. INCLUDE YOUR FULL NAME AND ADDRESS AND AS LONG AS THEY LAST, ONE WILL BE SENT TO YOU WITHIN A SHORT TIME.**

—The EDITORS



# Dedication

*The men of the 473rd whose names appear on this and the following page are among the thousands of our comrades who now sleep peacefully in U. S. Military Cemeteries throughout Italy.*

*They demonstrated their love of country and their desire for a better future for mankind in a manner which no man can challenge.*

*This book is not dedicated to them.*

*It is dedicated to the proposition that, with the help of God, we who are left may keep faith with the fallen. Keep faith by continuing to strive for that better world which they died trying to establish.*

—The EDITORS

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## CHAPTER I

### *A FIGHTING TEAM IS BORN*

"Flakfeet" veterans of the 434th, 435th, 532nd and 900th Antiaircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalions gathered with 2nd Armored Group Headquarters in Montecatini, Italy in January 1945.

The gathering wasn't a holiday occasion but an event which foreshadowed the entry into the bitter Italian campaign of a new separate Infantry regiment — the 473rd United States Infantry.

Most of the men in the Montecatini gathering had fought as Ack-ack in the Tunisian campaign and others had landed at Salerno. There were many who had fought at Cassino. Others had endured the bloody crossing of the Rapido River and some had downed Luftwaffe planes at Anzio.

Victory in battle was a tradition which these veterans brought to the Fifth Army's new battle-baby and the Regiment was officially activated on January 13, 1945. Training as Infantry began immediately.

Men of the 434th and 435th had fought as Infantry for several months along the Arno River and up to Strettoia and the 900th had had a very brief taste of the front line. Now the men were to get their first real training with Infantry weapons.

Many of the 473rd's officers were sent to battle-leadership school and the painful process of "teaching an old dog new tricks" got under way. These men, experts and seasoned veterans as AAA, were not enthusiastic about their new assignment as doughfeet. They went to work in earnest, however, because they were expected to learn in a matter of weeks the many things about Infantry warfare which usually are taught over many months training. Colonel Willis G. Cronk of Elberton, Washington, first Regimental Commander, began welding his men into a team which was to eventually mean trouble for the Wehrmacht.



## CHAPTER II

### *INTO THE BATTLE OF ITALY*

Training at Montecatini was originally scheduled to last into the month of March. Big things were in the wind, however, and General Mark Clark, commanding the Fifth Army, decided to commit the 473rd in a defensive role after only 31 days of training. This move was needed in order to free the 10th Mountain Division for its attack against the key terrain feature of Mt. Belvedere.

Attached to the IV Corps, the 473rd Infantry moved into the line on the night of 15 February. The 2nd Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. Hampton H. Lisle, was astride Highway 12 at Cutigliano. Major Paul Woodward's 3rd Battalion on the left, extended to Bagni di Lucca. The 1st Battalion was in reserve at San Marcello. The Regiment was known at the time as "Task Force 45."

This sector, while broad and thinly held on both sides of the line, was very rough and mountainous and the situation was static. On the 16th and 17th of February the first of many routine patrols went out to contact the enemy. At this time the Regiment was opposed by Italians of the 3rd Battalion, 5th San Marco Marine Regiment, augmented by a few Germans and light artillery.

On the afternoon of the 17th Colonel William P. Yarborough, famed paratrooper and former commander of the 509th Parachute Infantry in rugged Southern Italy fighting, arrived to take command of the Regiment. Colonel Cronk left for new duties with Fifth Army Headquarters.

The slightly built, active, youthful Yarborough, was the man destined to lead the regiment through the remainder of the Italian campaign.

On the 23rd of February, the 473rd was attached to the 92nd (colored) Infantry Division. The next day, Lt. Duane Nordenskjold, of Redwing, Minn., Sgt. William J. Morrison, of Detroit, Mich., and Pfc. Michael R. Alexander of Cortland, N. Y., became the Regiment's first casualties when their patrol encountered a minefield.

## CHAPTER III

### DEFENSE OF THE SERCHIO

From the beautiful and quiet Cutigliano front, the regiment moved into the Serchio Valley, which had been the scene of the famous German New Year's Day attack. The relief of the 365th and 366th Infantry Regiments by the 473rd was ordered by the 92nd Division on February 24 and by the 28th the regiment was conducting an active defense of its new sector.

The 1st Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. Peter L. Urban, held a three mile front west of the Serchio River, occupying the towns of Vergemoli, Calomini, Gallicano and Barca. Hills 352 and 437 were along the battalion front and the latter was shared with the Krauts until the first of April when C Company cleared it. The enemy west of the river were Italians of the Fascist "Italia" Division.

The 2nd and 3rd Battalions were east of the river opposed by the German 286th Infantry Regiment. The 3rd held Castelvecchio and Albiano while the 2nd held Barga, Sommocolonia and hill 906. Anti-tank company and the I and R platoon screened the left flank of the regiment at Visperégia.

"Jerry" had his normally excellent defensive set-up based on Quirico Ridge and the hills between Fattone and Vergemoli and he used his bunkers and minefields on the ridges and reverse slopes to good advantage. He knew the 473rd was opposing him on the forward slopes, however, because there were many patrols probing his lines, raiding his strongpoints and artillery and other weapons fired on anything that moved. Two hundred and two patrols were made by the 473rd during the month of March alone.

One feature of activity in March was the successful tank-infantry type raid on enemy positions. A platoon of Anti-tank company, commanded by Captain Ben H. Nevers, attached to 1st Battalion and supported by the 751st Tank Battalion, made the raid. Early on March 7th the force knocked out the enemy outpost at Casa Broglia, killing and capturing twenty four of twenty five enemy in a house.

On March 2nd at 6 PM two platoons of "C" Company raided the ridge just north of hill 437 but found the Italians in well-prepared positions.

The attack had barely gotten under way before a number of men fell in the center of the assault line. T-Sgt. Frank J. Pustka, of Hallettsville, Texas, was handling one of the platoons and found that machine gun fire from positions less than a hundred yards away had his outfit pinned down. One of ten grenades tossed his way wounded Pustka, but he worked his way close

to one of the death-dealing guns and knocked it out with white phosphorus grenades. Pustka earned the Silver Star and the newspapers reported "routine patrol activity in the Serchio Valley."

The 2nd Battalion sent several long patrols to Monte Del Omo, Monte L'Ucceleria and other mountains to the east toward the end of March. Small enemy outposts, difficult to reach, were engaged and there were casualties on both sides. Many of these patrols were out two days at a time because of the distances and laborious mountain climbing involved.

One source of amusement was the frequency of desertion among the enemy engineers posted as guards at the mouth of a tunnel near Castelnovo Di Garfagnana. The south end of this tunnel was at Gallicano where the Headquarters Company of the 1st Battalion found it a cinch to pick up any enemy desiring to reach our lines. Enemy deserters in the Serchio Valley were numerous and accounted for about two-thirds of the 500 prisoners taken by the 473rd there.

During this stabilized situation in March, additional officers and men attended schools to augment the brief training at Montecatini in February.

A "Special Combat Patrol Platoon" was formed from volunteers from all units of the regiment in March. Despite the fact they were told the platoon would be used in more dangerous missions than a normal rifleman would probably face, more than a hundred officers and men volunteered. Three officers and fifty enlisted men were selected.

Toward the end of March the regiment also received its first air support in the form of fighter-bomber missions against front-line enemy objectives and supply points.

On the 26th of March one of our patrols suffered casualties in a mine-field at Villa Sala and the patrol was subsequently captured by the enemy together with a relief patrol. There were also many successful patrols including a reconnaissance behind and completely around Quirico Ridge. More than a dozen patrols brought back prisoners.





**PAIN AND FATIGUE**, common visitors to the 473rd Infantry during the final drive in Italy, are graphically shown here as a wounded man is helped to the aid station by two of his comrades.

## CHAPTER IV

# ATTACK ON THE COAST

The enemy was expecting a major attack along the front and he was due to receive an attack. The 2nd Battalion was moved to Viareggio for training and preparation for an attack up the coast which was to prove to be part of the final blow against the Wehrmacht in Italy.

On April 3rd, General Mark W. Clark, commanding the 15th Army Group, addressed elements of the regiment at Fornaci in the Serchio. He told men of L Company that he personally had been following the ack-ack men before and since their conversion and that he had "one more job for the regiment to do."

The nature of that "job" was soon apparent. On the 5th of April, 1945, the 92nd Division jumped off at dawn after a heavy artillery preparation in the first phase of the Fifth Army's long awaited spring offensive.

Colonel Lisle's 2nd Battalion was in division reserve on the 5th and 6th of April. On the 7th it passed through the 370th Infantry and was committed against Strettoia hill mass which dominated Highway 1.

This was the well-entrenched position which anchored the enemy's Gothic Line (Green Line I) in the coastal sector. The enemy had excellent fields of fire and maximum observation. Artillery and mortar fires were poured against the hillsides in thundering barrages and the enemy replied in kind. The only way to take the hill was for Infantry to root through each concreted and revetted foxhole, and that is what the 2nd Battalion of the 473rd did.

The action of G Company, commanded by 1st Lt. Erhard E. Thiel of Chicago, Ill., is typical of what the 2nd Battalion faced during those rugged first days in the attack. Thiel's outfit attacked at 2 PM on the 7th.

There's a steep terraced hillside near Porta which is planted with olive trees. Up this feature on the 7th went the second platoon of G Company. It moved quickly and without difficulty for about a hundred and fifty yards and things looked as though the attack would be easy. Then, from medium range, came a blast of machine gun fire which swept the outfit from flank to flank. That fire came from an innocent looking vineyard.

A moment later, from a higher hill 600 yards to the right, another machine gun opened up and they began to work on G Company as if demonstrating a page in the manual depicting traversing and searching fire on



exposed troops. Soon after the machine guns started firing, round after round of enemy artillery began falling in the G Company area. Before that tiny bit of Italy was taken, ten G Company men were wounded and four lay dead on the rocky hillside.

It was during this action that Pfc. Robert Austin of Cortland, N. Y., distinguished himself in rescuing a wounded comrade under intense fire and won a recommendation for the Silver Star.

Lt. Col. Lisle was constantly with his forward troops in the heavy fighting of the Strettoia hills, giving orders, advice and encouragement which greatly contributed to the winning of the battle. He was in a small gap between E and F companies during the process of taking the last objective when a fatal round of enemy mortar killed him. The officers and men of the 2nd Battalion felt his loss deeply but they were soon reorganized after taking the objective. Major Robert W. Crandall, of Northwood Narrows, N. H., later took command of the battalion.

Meantime, over in the Serchio Valley, the 701st TD Battalion staged a tank demonstration on the 5th and 6th of March to deceive the enemy as to tank strength there as the 760th Tank Battalion moved over to the coastal sector.

The 1st Battalion launched a successful dawn attack on the 7th which cleared hill 437 completely and netted some prisoners. The 1st Battalion was then relieved and moved to the coastal sector.

The 1st Battalion had no sooner arrived on the coast than it was committed on the night of April 8 in the attack up Highway 1. Strettoia, Porta and Montignosa had been taken. The next objective was Massa.

The 1st Battalion moving up Highway 1 was held up for several hours at two defended anti-tank ditches about three miles south of Massa. Heavy fire slowed the construction of tank by-passes.

The 2nd Battalion was meeting moderate resistance at it advanced thru the high ground east of Highway 1. Both battalions began to feel the effect of heavy and medium coastal guns firing from Punta Bianca as they closed on Massa. Even Partisans, who had been of value in the Serchio in providing enemy information, were now used as voluntary litter bearers. Three of them died hero's deaths in attempting to carry out 1st Battalion casualties under heavy enemy fire south of Massa. Three tanks were also lost but the way was opened for the attack on the town.

There was a fire-fight with Jerries in factory buildings southwest of Massa and the evening of the 9th of April found the prominent hill of Rocca still in enemy hands and blocking the advance. Resistance was broken as



the 2nd Battalion with the 442nd (Nisei) Infantry moved forward in the hills to the east. The enemy had no alternative but to fall back to the Frigido River. He pulled across on the night of the 9th.

B Company moved into Massa on the morning of the 10th and contacted the enemy on the Frigido west of Highway 1. The remainder of the 1st Battalion cleared the town and established itself along what was to be known as "The Frigido River Line."

The 2nd Battalion had meanwhile reached the river to the east and was preparing to cross. The river was narrow but the terrain at Massa and west to the sea was flat, offering practically no cover from the thundering big guns at Punta Bianca. These guns kept the entire Massa area under fire. Visiting newsmen called the Regimental CP, in the Massa town-hall, "suicide courtyard." The cheering populace of the town took cover.

Plans called for three crossings of the Frigido, one to be made by the 2nd Battalion on the east and two by tanks and the 1st Battalion west of Massa. The 2nd Battalion's crossing met less opposition than was expected. After G Company had established a bridgehead the entire unit streamed across by dark on the 10th.

The 1st Battalion received heavy fire as it occupied a loop in the river bed and prepared to cross. Banks of the river were steep and the engineers were aided by doughboys trying to get the crossing site selected and prepared for tanks.

The movement of B Company westward created a gap between the 1st and 2nd Battalions which was filled by the volunteers of the Combat Patrol Platoon. Those men weren't content to stay on the Massa side of the river, but infiltrated across and up along the rock and concrete walled banks on the north side. This put them in Ortolo which became just another word for trouble. There were many deeds of heroism these days and there was also treachery.

Enemy in a house in the "Y" of Ortolo road drew fire from the Patrol Platoon and hastily displayed a white flag. The patrol approached closer. The Jerry waving the flag dropped it and threw grenades which caught several of the men. Machine guns and burp guns opened up and the fight was on. The enemy was in company strength and his counterattack forced the Patrol Platoon to withdraw to the south bank of the river. The volunteer unit lost heavily in that action—eleven men and two of its three officers were casualties. The gap had been filled, however, and the enemy strong-point of Ortolo became a hot spot for him as we tossed in thousands of rounds of mortar and artillery, tank and tank-destroyer fire.

West of Highway 1 the situation didn't clear up on the night of the 10th. It wasn't until 11 AM on the 11th that B Company got orders to cross the Fri-

gido. Baker Company had gotten only 100 yards north of the river when intense machine gun fire and grenades pinned down its whole left flank.

Pvt. William Ralston of Godieville, Ky., a first platoon rifleman, then went into action on his own. He braved the heavy fire and grenades and crawled to within ten yards of the troublesome gun. Things then got so hot he had to get out of there or be killed. He worked his way to a small building near the gun position, found it locked and had to break down the door. Ralston then knocked a hole in the ceiling, got to the second story, drew a bead on the enemy gunner and killed him. Two other Jerries called it quits when Rifleman Ralston fired grenades into the position. Ralston's recommendation for the Silver Star credits him with making B Company's crossing of the Frigido a success.

The remainder of the 1st Battalion now pushed toward Ortolo and the Frigido line was broken. Self-propelled guns which supported the enemy's defense of the river, were soon overrun and the 1st and 2nd Battalions moved again into the hills.

The 2nd Battalion on the right had little small-arms opposition while moving from Mirteto to Fabbrica, just west of Carrara, which they found cleared by the 442nd and partisans, but the Punta Bianca guns were "lowering the boom" on Carrara periodically.

The 1st Battalion moved up to take Nazzano and a task force of tanks, supported by Anti-tank Company fighting as riflemen, advanced northwest from their crossing of the Frigido to clear the factory areas on the Marina di Massa—Marina di Carrara coastal flatland. The force reached and occupied Avenza bringing it on the line from Carrara to Marina di Carrara with the 1st and 2nd Battalions, by dawn of 12 April.

The 473rd Infantry had been fighting hard for five days and several companies were reduced in strength to two rifle platoons by the battles of Strettoia Hill and the Frigido, but the test was still ahead.

The vaunted Gothic Line, which was technically called "Green Line I," was anchored in the west on the line of thousand-odd foot mountains just north of the Carrione River between Carrara and Marina di Carrara. On the east the line fell back to north and east in an arc of higher and very rugged mountains. This sector fell to the 442nd (Nisei) Infantry—a source of real encouragement to the 473rd in the battles which followed. It meant that with those skilful, courageous Jap-Americans there, the right flank was secure.

To the west the mountains fell away two miles from the coast; here the enemy placed his confidence in a profusion of minefields, a gun-and-pillbox-studded concrete anti-tank wall between Mt. Barbuto and the coast, and the benefit of superior observation from Fontia, St. Lucia, and Hill 123, all of which dominated the coastal flat.





**THE RUGGED TERRAIN** north of Massa is clearly illustrated in this photo of a German smoke shell bursting in the valley. In the extreme right foreground can be seen two of our Artillery observers spotting enemy targets in the valley.



## CHAPTER V

# SMASHING THE GOTHIC LINE

On the 13th the 473rd closed on the defenses of this Gothic Line. It matched the enemy with small arms, mortar and grenades and poured artillery on the well-protected Krauts manning the network of dugouts, pillboxes, and trenches on the hills.

Enemy tanks and self-propelled guns were dug-in on the ridges and he had sufficient troops from 281st and 285th Regiments of 148th Division in between and on the slopes to make every foot gained costly to the attacker. The guns of Punta Bianca spoke in a loud voice hampering the work of wire crews. Captured maps indicated that Jerry had most of the key points "zeroed in" and artillery concentrations plotted in advance.

The 2nd Battalion attacked uphill from Carrara to the west toward Fontia. This was bitter fighting of the kind that won the war in Italy—Every movement brought torrents of fire from the enemy. Every round of ammunition, every grenade, every mortar round had to be laboriously carried up that long hillside of fire. It was a day's labor just making the trip once, yet some ammunition carriers, litter bearers, communication men and others made the trip four and five times each 24 hours. Some didn't make it. There were more than 50 killed and 200 wounded in the 473rd between the 13th and 18th of April.

The 1st Battalion, now under the command of Lt. Col. Phelan, started the bloody uphill attack against Hill 366 with "B" Company on the left, "A" Company on the right and "C" Company in reserve. It was planned to commit "C" Company in the attack later that day, and the morning was spent patrolling and planning. "A" and "B" met considerable opposition and were slowed to a crawl. "C" Company was committed at noon on the 13th with platoons abreast. 1st Lt. Norman E. Johnston's 1st Platoon, composed of remnants of the former 1st and 2nd Platoons, was on the company right and 2nd Platoon under 1st Lt. William T. Barns was on the left. T-Sgt. Patrick J. Quinn had the weapons platoon initially at the foot of the hill to provide supporting fire.

Opposition half way up the first hill consisted of rifle, machine gun and rifle grenade fire. Potato-masher grenades and a mortar barrage were thrown in by the enemy for good measure. All of this was despite the artillery preparation made for the 1st Battalion's attack. Sniping from trenches and dugouts seriously wounded one man and killed the aid man

who went to help him. The machine gun positions were taken after a number of enemy were killed and six taken prisoner.

Three houses on a road parallel to the base of the hill were taken after a 20-minute firefight. Then the combined 1st and 3rd Platoon was held up by machine gun and rifle fire while the 2nd Platoon advanced within 300 yards of the church at S. Lucia. There it was stopped by barbed wire and MG fire. Bangalore torpedoes were not available and the 2nd Platoon fell back to the company's defense line on the road crossed earlier that afternoon.

A mortar barrage on this defensive setup killed S-Sgts. Clark, Peterson, and Wiese. S-Sgt. Lumbreraz was placed in command of the combined 1st and 3rd Platoons. When Lt. Barns was killed by rifle fire while checking defensive positions this left the company commander, 1st Lt. Clarence E. Doughty of Jena, La., as the only officer in "C" Company. On the 14th the attack continued but gained no important headway. Sgt. Foster C. Eaton assumed command of 2nd Platoon when T-Sgt. Pustka was wounded.

On the morning of the 14th five enemy machine guns were delaying the advance of both battalions near Fontia. "F" Company worked up hill 427 at about 11 AM and got within a short distance of the guns when Jerry opened up and pinned them down. 1st Lt. Thomas A. O'Boyle of Philadelphia, Pa., Company Commander, succeeded in getting his troops out of their exposed positions and regrouped for a second assault.

After two hours of perilous movement he had managed to get within 20 yards of the machine guns to direct a mortar barrage. Then, as so frequently happens in combat, things didn't go according to the book — smoke rounds from the barrage fell in the midst of "F" Company. Casualties from the short rounds were heavy and threatened to completely disorganize the attack. Lt. O'Boyle visited his squads, encouraged and directed the continuance of the attack and directed the care and evacuation of the wounded.

The attack on these positions had begun at 11 AM and it was a bitter, bloody and discouraging day cleaning out the machine guns but at 5 PM the job was done. Fontia was clear of enemy. A few hours later this advance coupled with other advances by the 2nd Battalion and assisted by the 1st Battalion's pressure on S. Lucia forced the enemy in the 2nd Battalion's sector to withdraw through Ortonova to Casano and the hill behind it.

Before dawn on the 15th "C" Company again launched an attack on Hill 366, passed to the left of the troublesome barbed wire, and had a terrific fire-fight for the church on the crest of the hill at S. Lucia. "Kraut" survivors fell back to dugouts and trenches on a knoll 100 yards away. Lt. Col. Phelan, 1st Battalion Commander who had spent his three days as CO

in the most forward positions, moved to the church and directed the battle from there.

About noon, Sgt. Antonio Tamas and his squad were given the mission of rushing the enemy position. They ran through the heavy fire and practically onto the Germans. Sgt. Tamas forced one German to tell his comrades to surrender by marching him along at gunpoint to each trench and dugout. Sgt. Tamas and his squad took 52 prisoners in this skirmish while losing only two wounded. (Tamas received the Silver Star.) Before the position was completely consolidated Jerry threw in a heavy mortar and artillery barrage. One of these rounds landed in the church doorway and killed Lt. Col. Phelan, several "A" and "C" Company men and some PW's. Lt. Doughty was painfully wounded in the hand, but chose to stay with his company. S. Lucia, key observation point in the Green Line II was taken.

While Companies "A" and "C" were taking "Church Hill" (S. Lucia) "B" Company 15 April was chalking up a quick win on Hill 123 to the 1st Battalion's left flank. An hour's mortar preparation by "D" Company and artillery preparation preceded the attack. Capt. Cauthorn led the 3rd Platoon and filed around the base of the bald hill taking 11 Germans by surprise.

The 3rd, with Lt. Bauder's 1st Platoon following in single file, got about half way up hill 123 when the 2nd Platoon, led by Lt. Sherwood passed through and rushed up the hill. Two squads got to the top without a scratch but one squad and the mortar section caught machine gun fire from the now-awakened Jerries. They reached the top too, after having several casualties.

Eleven PWs poured out from the hilltop concrete OP, and the trench around the top of the hill ran red with German blood. Then Jerry smashed at the hill with artillery, counterattacked without success at dusk with 15 or 20 men. The Regiment's wounded had to stay on the hill until five o'clock the next morning when litter bearers could get to them. Meantime Pfc. Charles J. Jennee heroically aided the wounded on the hill under fire. When Cpl. Howard D. Adams and his radio were silenced forever, Pfc. Howard Blake, Pfc. Stephen J. Grabowski and Pvt. Earl C. Peters voluntarily braved the heavy fire and returned with another radio in three hours. Total casualties for Hill 123 were four killed and 11 wounded. Forty Jerries were bagged. This was different from the slugging warfare of Fontia and Hill 366. Some of the men called it "8 Minute Hill"—that was the time required to take it. Officers who looked over the permanent and improvised defenses later marveled that Hill 123 was taken at all.

As the Gothic Line defenses crumbled the Germans threw in all kinds of troops. The 281st and 285th Regiments were so badly chewed that their battalions were down to 100 men and artillerymen, marines, sailors and

service troops were put in as replacements. Some PWs complained that they didn't know how to fire their machine guns, had no idea of what unit they were in, and knew no order but to hold until death.

Only the 1048th Reconnaissance Battalion, which had been only slightly hurt on the coastal flat in its elaborate pillboxes, fell back each time in a semblance of order. Things looked bad for the 148th Division, but it still had plenty of ability to make trouble. It fell back to Nicola. The Parmignola canal, along which ran the anti-tank wall, remained the seaward bastion, and to the east the enemy held the hills just north of Casano.

The 4th High Mountain Battalion and part of his best troops in Italy—the 361st Panzer Grenadier Regiment—were sent against the 442nd advancing on our right. This allowed him to throw all of his divisional reserves against the 473rd.

The 286th Regiment in the Serchio shifted a battalion to our front and Punta Bianca guns began hurling their biggest projectiles (305 millimeters) against our front line troops. The Regiment's plan was clear. With the Gothic Line behind it was intended to smash north to seize Sarzana from which either La Spezia or Aulla could be attacked.

The attack by battle-weary bodies which had known no real rest since the jumpoff at Strettoia Hill had to continue. If Jerry was ever to be really defeated now was the time to do it.

While the 1st and 2nd Battalions were thus engaged on the coast, men of the 3rd Battalion were killing their share of Germans in the Serchio Valley. During 15th and 16th of April, 3rd Battalion patrols were feeling out enemy strongpoints. Fiantone, Treppignana, Riana and Quirico Ridge fell to men of "I" and "K" Companies, supported by "M" Company, while "L" Company moved over to the coast where it was attached to the depleted 2nd Battalion.

On the 16th and 17th the 1st Battalion blasted away at the Nicola reverse slope defense while the 2nd Battalion moved north from Ortonovo and east of Casano into the next hill line. There were no more extensive mined and barbed-wire defenses on these hills, and fewer prepared dugouts and no pillboxes. Jerry made the most of hasty positions, delaying our advance as much as he could.

The Special Combat Patrol Platoon was again committed, this time under T-Sgt. Adams. Between the 1st and 2nd Battalions, the platoon cleaned out Casano and helped clear Villa Dorgia.

Despite flanking fire from the 90 mm. guns emplaced in the coastal anti-tank wall, tanks and TD's moved up and helped the 1st Battalion clear all of Nicola hill and the inevitable surge across the stream line and



Highway 1 behind the hill began. On the 19th "F" Company made a swift move northwest from Casano and cut Highway 1. Extensive demolitions around the anti-tank wall and north along the highway were cleared and the tank and tank-destroyer force sped up the highway to "F" Company's position.

The 1st Battalion moved north past Sarzana airfield and spread over the flatland to the Magra River with hardly any opposition. The 2nd Battalion to the right of the highway found Castelnuovo di Magra clear of enemy and reached Caniparola.

On the night of the 21st CWO Wallace Davis of Hopkinsville, Ky., T-5 Michael Batinic of Verona, Mich., T-5 Clarence Mears and an artillery forward observers party crossed the Magra River with Partisan guides. They remained in the vicinity of Partisan-held Ameglia, 1 mile from the nearest friendly troops for three days. Davis and his party established radio contact and observers directed artillery fire against the giant enemy coastal guns beyond the Punta Bianca Peninsula. Mr. Davis was awarded the Bronze Star for this feat.

Patrols to Sarzana on the 20th and 21st found it strongly held. The 1st Battalion was relieved by extending 2nd Battalion and Task Force Curtis, and was placed in divisional reserve on the 20th.

The 3rd Battalion came over from the Serchio and was first committed on the right flank of the 2nd Battalion. It jumped off at dawn on the 21st from Caniparola and throughout a day of heavy fighting was able to gain only 500 yards. During the night the attack was continued and only about 300 more costly yards were gained.

On the morning of the 22nd the 1st Battalion returned from its brief respite and relieved the 2nd Battalion. The enemy was battered but not shattered. Supporting artillery from the 92nd Division crashed into Sarzana in terrific concentrations and the enemy retaliated by throwing his "grand piano" shell (305 mm.) into CPs near Caniparola and at anything that moved on Highway 1.

The 1st Battalion (on the left) and the 3rd Battalion (on the right) attacked abreast on the 22nd against "College Hill" just outside of Sarzana and Hill 407 above Caniparola. If successful, Sarzana would fall.

"K" Company had Hill 407 as its objective. When his leading 1st Platoon was pinned down and the platoon leader wounded, Captain John F. McCarthy of Fitchburg, Mass., "K" Company's commander, personally braved heavy rifle and machine gun fire to reach the platoon position. He was hit by rifle fire as he reached the position but disregarded his wounds

and gave his 2nd and 3rd Platoons instructions for movement to outflank the position. Then the wounded Captain McCarthy personally led the 1st Platoon in an assault on the enemy position. He was killed during the charge. It was a bitter day for "K" Company for it lost 11 killed and 74 wounded.

The 1st Battalion and 3rd Battalion smashed ahead, dug Germans out of College Hill bunkers, and the remaining Krauts withdrew in haste before this onslaught while tanks and Anti-tank Company cleared Sarzana with negligible opposition. It looked like a chariot race as no opposition was met by the tank-infantry column moving up Highway 1 toward S. Stefano. The race ended quickly when reconnaissance found an enemy delaying detachment in the factory area at the southern outskirts of S. Stefano. The Germans fought a few hours of the evening of the 23rd but promptly pulled out and moved back to Aulla.

Now the Regimental I and R platoon became the key unit in the 473rd. Enemy resistance was cracking and forward reconnaissance became more than holding your helmet at arm's length to test for bullet-holes. Foot and motorized patrols took the lead in probing for the enemy.

1st Lt. Earl H. Eggett, I and R Platoon leader, had been leading the tank-infantry column up Highway 1 when he spotted the opposition at S. Stefano. On the 23rd he successfully patrolled into La Spezia and found the Partisans in control of the town. The enemy had fallen back to the hills of La Foce, a suburb. A 92nd Reconnaissance troop and tank force "TF Steinman" with a platoon of Anti-tank Company as infantry moved into La Spezia on the basis of this report and the 92nd Division credited their Recon troop with the city's capture on the night of 23-24 April.

On the 24th without firing a shot, the 1st Battalion moved through S. Stefano and seized the high ground two miles northwest of the town after crossing the Magra River. The 3rd Battalion on the right hiked through the hills north of S. Stefano without opposition. The 2nd Battalion and Regimental Headquarters forded the Magra and moved to La Spezia.

At La Spezia the 2nd Battalion encountered about fifty marines with 6 x 20 mm guns at La Foce. Two guns of Cannon Company supporting the 2nd Battalion engaged the 20's in a direct fire duel and knocked out three while "G" Company captured the remainder and liquidated the enemy pocket. Late on the 24th the balance of the 473rd moved through La Spezia and a combat team was formed.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE DASH TO GENOA

The 473rd combat team consisted of the Regiment plus the 598th Field Artillery Battalion, C Company, 760th Tank Battalion; B Company, 317th Engineers; A Company, 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion less 1 platoon); C Company, 317th Medical Battalion; Naval Shore Fire Control Party, and Assault Gun platoon of 758th Tank Battalion.

The mission was to take Genoa, Maj. Gen. E. M. Almonds, commanding general of the 92nd Division, bet Brig. Gen. Brann, 15th Army Group G-3 that the force would make the 110 miles up the coast in "four days." The job was done in 60 hours.

The 2nd Battalion supported by platoons of 760th Tank Battalion and 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion spearheaded the push up Highway 1 with the Regimental I and R platoon as point.

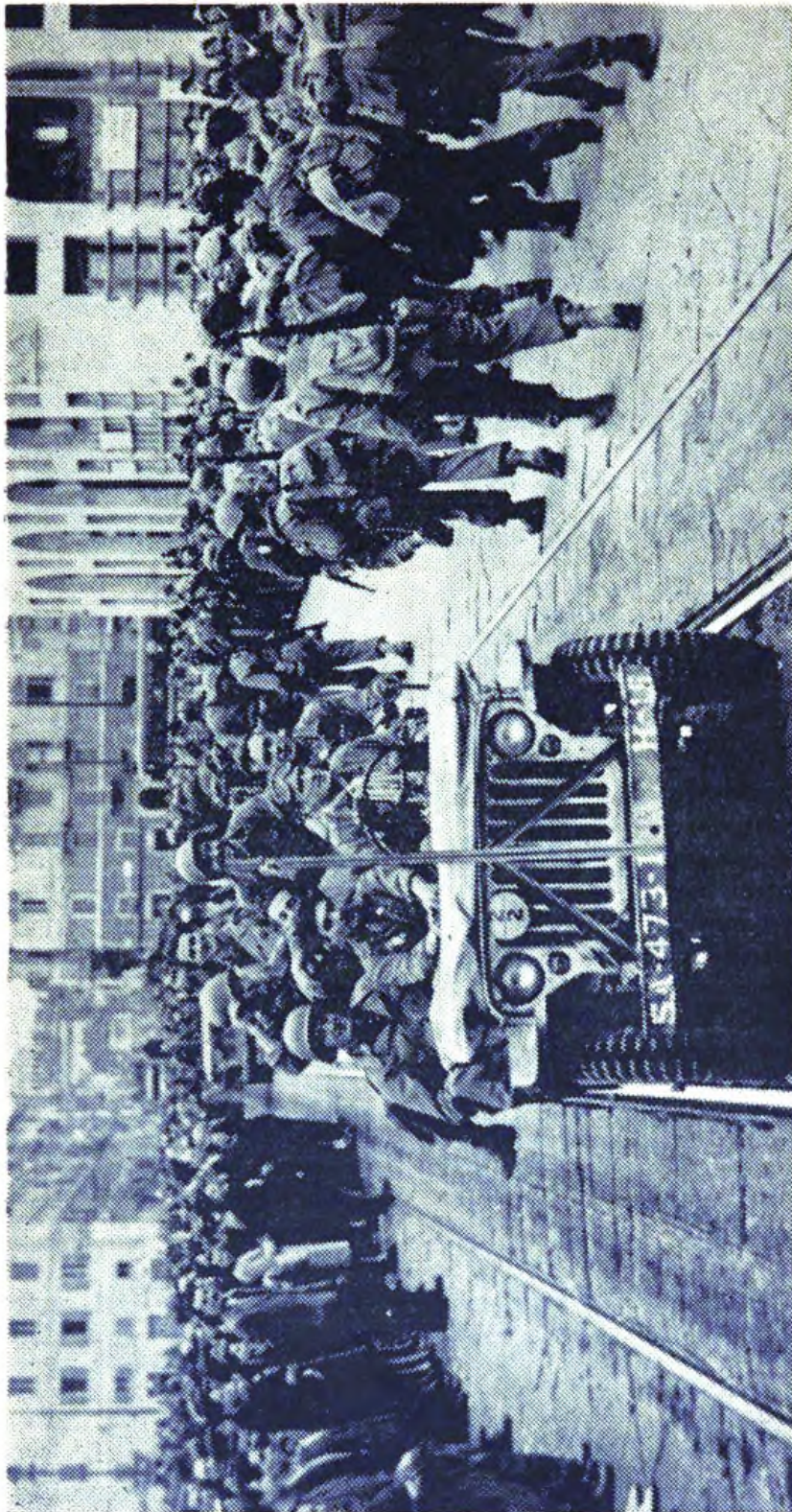
The 1st Battalion cleared the area between Highway 1 and the sea. Foot troops were mounted on jeeps, trucks, tanks and TDs wherever possible, and only when resistance or demolitions were encountered did they dismount for a time. Partisans and doughfeet augmented the engineers in repairing road demolitions and the column reached Sestri Lavante by 3 PM — only nine hours after the jump-off at La Spezia. The speed of the advance caught the enemy short. The I and R platoon ran into a German Infantry and Artillery column at the Entella River just southeast of Chiavari. Part of the Artillery was already in "March Order" and the enemy made frantic efforts to withdraw. He had no choice but to turn and fight.

The next five hours enemy 135 mm coastal defense guns above the hillside tunnel at Chaivari and 152 mm coastal guns at Portofino played hob with the 2nd Battalion's motor column south of Lavagna. While troops dismounted and reconnaissance crossed the stream, enfilade fire on the road knocked out two jeeps, two trucks and a weapons carrier.

Artillery deployed while tanks and TD's took their toll of enemy infantry on the Chiavari hillside. Counter-battery fire silenced the enemy artillery about dusk, but the cost had been heavy. Besides casualties, 12 jeeps and several trucks were wrecked.

It was during this action that Lt. Winifred H. Keeling, MAC, of Benton.





**INTO GENOA rides a happy, victorious group of 473rd Infantry troops at the end of a dash up the Ligurian Coast. Two Generals  
wagered the final drive to the coastal city would take four days!**



III., won the Silver Star for dashing through heavy fire several times to salvage medical supplies from a burning vehicle so the wounded could get immediate attention.

One of the Regiment's greatest losses was Major Robert Crandall, who had led the 2nd Battalion through its battles for Massa, the Gothic Line and Sarzana. While personally directing the Lavagna-Chiavari battle, this one-time German prisoner who chose to stay and fight in Italy rather than return to the United States during the war, fell in action before the enemy he sought to destroy. Major Crandall was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. Capt David Streger of New Rochelle, N. Y., became 2nd Battalion Commander.

Reorganized and prepared to attack at dawn, the 2nd Battalion met no opposition. The I and R platoon rolled ahead after the masterful demolition at Zoagli had been partially repaired. The 3rd Battalion in Regimental Reserve came up and followed G Company up the Carasco road. The balance of the 2nd Battalion moved up the coastal road followed by the 1st Battalion, now in reserve.

Lt. Eggett's patrol got to Rapallo with no opposition, drove into a perplexed group of Italians who promptly surrendered, accepted the surrender of a company of Germans at S. Margherita Ligure and found a handful of German Marine Artillerymen defending Ruta Pass with an anti-tank gun. After warning our advance tank-infantry column, the I and R platoon went into the hills to the right and found a road into the enemy rear at Ruta. Lt. Eggett later returned with the tank-infantry team and the enemy were killed or captured in the 473rd's last battle in Italy. Lt. Eggett received the Silver Star for his part in the action.

Comogli garrison of 84 men surrendered to the Special Combat Platoon and F Company.

The I and R platoon entered Genoa at 0745B and Col. Yarborough led the forward elements of the 2nd Battalion into the city at 9:30 AM on the 27th of April. Some sniping between Fascists and Partisans continued for two days while the 473rd pushed north and west to secure ground around the city.

The German garrison of 700 men, west of the harbor entrance surrendered at 4:30 PM and 259 Germans at the east end of the harbor entrance surrendered to Major E. P. Schmink at 5 PM on the 27th.

G Company and the 3rd Battalion engineered the surrender of nearly 3,000 troops at Uscio and Ferrada northeast of Genoa. The Giovi garrison of Colonel Almers was in 1st Battalion hands after dickering with Partisans. Smaller detachments in and around Genoa from Maj. Gen. Mein-

hold's 135th Fortress Brigade were surrendering to anyone willing to pick them up. The regiment established a Prisoner of War stockade in the athletic stadium.

Only the Monte Moro garrison held out. Their commander asked for terms to the effect, "I won't fire on Genoa or your troops if you will let me stay unmolested in my fort on the hill." Maj. Gen. Almond, CG of the 92nd, Brig. Gen. Colbern and Col. Yarborough spoke persuasively and plans were laid for a combined air-sea-land assault on the strategic fortress-hill. The arrogant German decided to surrender and the Regimental S-2 with a mixture of Headquarters and A Company troops accepted the surrender at 3 PM on April 28. This brought the total prisoner bag of the regiment to 11,553.

Large quantities of enemy material, hundreds of guns, including the coastal guns at Monte Moro were captured and hundreds of thousands of rounds of ammunition of all descriptions were inventoried.

While the 1st Battalion garrisoned Genoa and the 2nd Battalion bivouacked in reserve in the city's outskirts, the 3rd Battalion guarded the PW stockade and K Company moved to Savona for garrison duty.

When the formal surrender of all German troops in Italy was announced effective at noon on the 2nd of May, 473rd Infantrymen merely smiled and watched civilians and Partisans shoot up old German flares. Their work had been completed and their battles won.

One month in the attack had cost the regiment more than 500 casualties but it had inflicted probably three times that many on the enemy and had taken more than three times its own strength in prisoners.

No regiment in the gallant Fifth Army had suffered more during this period and few if any had a more interesting battle story to tell since the birth of the 473rd at Montecatini four months before the end of the war.

In July of 1945, the fact that the great global war was far from over was brought home to the Regiment as it waited redeployment near Rome. War Department plans which originally called for the unit to be used as Strategic Reserve were changed. Orders for deactivation came and the former ack-ack soldiers were shipped home for a brief rest before starting toward the Jap war in the Pacific.

Over a short period of seven months a fighting team was born, trained, fought in the decisive battle of victory in Italy and disbanded so its men could be sent to finish the job of bringing peace and order to a battle-torn world.



**THIS LONG LINE** of defeated Wehrmacht soldiers in Genoa is but part of the great bag of prisoners taken by the 473rd Infantry during the closing phases of the Spring Campaign. The flow of PW's was so great, they were often turned over to Partisans for guarding as were the group shown here.

# Awards For Valor

*(The list of awards included herein is not complete for two reasons (1) Recommendations were still being processed when this book was printed and (2) Many men who joined the regiment after the war had decorations which they earned elsewhere and it was impossible to include those in this list.)*

—The EDITORS

## DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS (POSTHUMOUS)

Major Robert W. Crandall

## LEGION OF MERIT

T-Sgt. Edwin L. Scales

## THE SILVER STAR

T-Sgt. James N. Humphries, 34514637  
Major Martin O. Pattison  
Capt. David Streger  
1st. Lt. Thomas A. O'Boyle  
1st. Lt. Clarence E. Doughty  
Sgt. John J. Callagher  
Sgt. Charles S. Grosso  
Sgt. Antonio Tames  
T-5 Howard E. Crummett

T-5 Roy L. Maberry  
T-5 William B. MacArthur  
Pfc. Robert F. Austin  
Pvt. William A. Ralston  
Pvt. John W. Starzynski  
T-Sgt. William W. Burgin (Post.)  
Col. William P. Yarborough  
S-Sgt. James L. Bullock  
Pfc. Orville F. Barron

## THE BRONZE STAR

1st Lt. Desmond L. Crawford, 0-1045706  
1st. Lt. Wm. W. Hay, 0-1040733  
S-Sgt. Merle V. Westerly, 37197802  
T-4 Freeman A. Moore, 34242823  
T-5 Fred F. Danay, 36305413  
Lt. Col. Lisle, 0-250734  
T-5 Stanley G. Swala, 12095258  
T-5 William J. Henning, 32271648  
Lt. James R. Olivo  
1st Lt. Robert J. Liddel  
1st Lt. Thomas R. Beam  
2nd Lt. Salvatore G. Mormino  
T-Sgt. Francis J. MacDonald  
T-Sgt. James T. Rund  
S-Sgt. Wayne E. Johnson  
S-Sgt. Joseph H. Morris  
Sgt. Stanley M. Shostak  
Sgt. Ralph E. Lytle  
Cpl. Paul O. Pesse  
Pfc. Vincent J. Toto  
Pfc. William L. Thomas  
Pfc. John J. McSorley  
Pfc. Leroy C. Goodling  
Pfc. Kenneth W. Beed  
Pvt. William J. Galligani  
Pvt. Paul A. Gallucci  
Pvt. Herman S. Knoepfler  
Pvt. Norman W. Romoser  
Pvt. Fred A. Riwlinson  
Pvt. James A. Rosen  
Pvt. Zane S. Fiak  
Pvt. Robert W. Philbek

Capt. Albert J. Sanders  
2d Lt. Lawrence Newhall  
CWO Wallis E. Davis  
T-Sgt. Ronald C. Kent  
S-Sgt. Olin R. Levitt  
S-Sgt. Walter J. Meinz  
S-Sgt. Rupert Chapman  
S-Sgt. Donald T. Klaren  
Sgt. Joseph H. Ahern  
Sgt. Anthony J. Garafola  
Sgt. Ross B. McReaken  
Sgt. John M. Boel  
Sgt. J. B. Parmer  
Sgt. Joseph West, Jr.  
T-4 John H. Nixon  
Cpl. Ralph Lawson  
Cpl. Charles Lee, Jr.  
Cpl. Guyde A. Lombari  
T-5 Alex J. Bartoszek  
T-5 Alonzy Smith  
T-5 Delmar T. Weeks  
Pfc. Charles Jenne  
Pfc. Olie A. Olsen  
Pfc. Robert F. Petrie  
Pfc. William H. Schaefer  
Pfc. Luverne C. Spanjer  
Pvt. John H. Curran  
Pvt. Joseph F. Hicczewski  
Pvt. Fay C. Noe  
Pvt. Jack J. Reynolds  
Pvt. Chester S. Verbinski  
Pvt. Herbert H. Wagner



# Messages To The Regiment

HEADQUARTERS IV CORPS  
ITALY, 1945

*With a noteworthy background in combat as anti-aircraft artillery and later splendid performance in an Infantry role assumed while in front-line contact with the enemy, the units from which the 473rd Infantry was formed brought to it the highest traditions of the battle-tried American fighting man. In its subsequent operations the Regiment never failed to live up to this fine heritage in fullest measure.*

*Its service with IV Corps under trying Apennine winter conditions in the Cutigliano and Serchio sectors merited the greatest praise, and all personnel in this headquarters are proud of the offensive spirit and the enviable combat record established by the 473rd in the Spring Campaign.*

LT. GENERAL WILLIS D. CRITTENBERGER,  
Commanding.

HEADQUARTERS 92ND INF. DIVISION  
ITALY, 1945

*As the 473rd Infantry leaves active service in our armed forces, I send you this farewell message with the sincere hope that each of you may find success in the future equal to that of your fine service here in Italy.*

*I knew most of you first as ack-ack soldiers pinch-hitting as infantrymen on the Fifth Army Front along the Cinquale Canal south of Massa in October, 1944. There you did excellent work in unfamiliar roles. Next you were selected to form the bulk of the newly organized 473rd Infantry, which after an intensive training period, was declared fit for combat employment in the coming spring offensive.*

*The 473rd Infantry was attached to the 92nd Division on 28 February and served in a distinguished manner under my command until the completion of the war on 2 May. Your services were responsible for the fine record made by your regiment which captured Massa and Sarzana, occupied La Spezia and pursued the enemy for eighty-five miles along the Ligurian Coast to Genoa.*

*Occupying Genoa and clearing the enemy from many resisting pockets, such as Monte Moro Fortress, your detachments*

*moved to occupy the Genoa area and contact the French Forces on the Italian Frontier; all was done with dispatch and efficiency under your energetic and capable commander, Colonel William P. Yarborough.*

*I join with you in heartfelt regret for the many noble officers and men who lost their lives in battle with us. We must see that the peace is preserved so that they will not have died in vain.*

*You have my sincere thanks for your participation in the successful operations of the 92nd Infantry Division.*

E. M. ALMOND,  
Major General, U. S. Army,  
Commanding.

HEADQUARTERS, FIFTH ARMY  
ITALY, 1945

*As members of the 473rd Infantry Regiment you may well be proud of your fine record throughout the long bitter Italian campaign. In your earlier role as antiaircraft troops you accomplished with conspicuous success the highly important mission of furnishing antiaircraft protection for troops and installations engaged in critical battles in Africa, Sicily and Italy. Then, following an intensive infantry training program, which found you grouped as Task Force 45, well known throughout the Fifth Army, you performed with proportionate success your new infantry role in the Arno Valley, capturing Pisa and pressing the enemy back into the mountainous recesses of his Apennine Gothic Line. Later when organized in January, 1945, and converted into the 473rd Infantry Regiment—with headquarters personnel furnished from an Armored Group Headquarters — you played a significant part in the destruction of the enemy in Italy, performing side by side with infantry regiments of long standing, and added new laurels to your already enviable record.*

*I am pleased to have this privilege to say to you "well done" and at this time of the inactivation of your fine regiment to wish each of you individually every future success.*

L. K. TRUSCOTT JR.  
Lt. General,  
Commanding.

OFFICERS AND MEN OF  
THE 473RD INFANTRY:

*To have served with the 473rd Infantry has been an unforgettable experience.*

*During its short period of existence it has added a clean-cut, proud chapter to the military history of the United States Army.*

*Our Regiment which started its fighting career at first slowly and cautiously in the Serchio Valley, finally, became more and more sure of itself, and culminated its efforts with a series of shock attacks which cleared the whole Ligurian Coast of the enemy.*

*Our outfit learned the infantry game the hard way. How well it learned is a matter of history. The blasted wreckage of concrete pillboxes, anti-tank ditches and scientifically constructed trenches around Massa, Carrara and Chiavari are proof that nothing man-made could stand in the path of an inspired outfit fighting for a just cause.*

*We will not forget those who remain in Italy. Their graves are part of America.*

*Our job in Europe is finished. We have accomplished our mission.*

*The Regiment is deactivated on the official records only. To those of us who have faced death and hardship together so often, it will always live as a symbol of comradeship and devotion to duty in the great American tradition.*

W. P. YARBOROUGH,  
Col., Inf.





